

## Reflection Paper

**Subject:** Module One Reflection Paper

**Grade:** 8

**Module 1: Classroom Environment for Active Learning :** Teacher implements instruction in order to engage students in rigorous and relevant learning and to promote their curiosity about the world at large by:

**Selected Indicator:** 4. Fostering appropriate standards of behavior that support a productive learning environment for all students

### Goal:

I will learn about and apply strategies to support improved student behavior so that it interferes less with instruction and promotes a better environment for learning. I will learn about and apply more appropriate and consistent consequences for inappropriate student behavior.

### Initial Summary:

Student behavior interferes with instruction or others\' opportunity to learn.

Currently I am:

- Attempting to seat students in a manner that best supports learning.
- Redirecting when behavior is inappropriate or unacceptable.
- Redirecting when student behavior appears to interfere with others\' opportunity to learn.
- Using the Critical Thinking Center inconsistently and allowing students to use the CTC desk for an individual work seat to facilitate getting work done.

Consequences may be inappropriate and/or inconsistently applied

Currently I am:

- Inconsistently applying consequences based upon the overall behavior of the student.
- Not always following through with consequences when given.
- Not recording consequences so that I remember what consequences are given because it is in the middle of a lesson and my goal is to move on with the lesson.

### Reflection:

I met with my TEAM Mentor and discussed various opportunities for growth in knowledge and practice in the area of classroom environment. We selected: Indicator 4, Fostering appropriate standards of behavior that support a productive learning environment for all students and specifically chose two areas of concentration, Student behavior interferes with instruction or others' opportunity to learn, and consequences may be inappropriate and/or inconsistently applied.

In reading chapter 3, "Disciplinary Interventions", and chapter 4, "Teacher-Student Relationships", in Marzano's Classroom Management that Works, he states exactly how I was feeling: "One very disturbing discovery from the research is that teachers generally believe that they are not only unprepared to deal with disruptive behavior, but that the amount of disruptive behavior in their class substantially interferes with their teaching." That book not only affirmed that I felt just like other teachers, but also enhanced my desire to learn more about classroom environment.

One of the challenges that I faced was classroom configuration. My room is shared with two art teachers and is divided by a curtain. I have tables and stools rather than individual desks. My first attempt at configuration was to have three students at each table one on each side and one on the end facing the front of the room. I felt that this would allow me to have students as close as possible to the front of the room. It seemed after trying this configuration that some students were drawn very easily off task. In addition to viewing the APA video, Practical Classroom Management, I consulted with my mentor on configuration. We met in my room and she suggested that I move seating around so that two students were at each desk instead of three and that we face them to the front of the room. This configuration worked out better in terms of behavioral management, but it became more difficult due to the classroom now being deeper and some students not being able to see the overhead projection for modeling of notes. Based upon Marzano and the American Psychological Association video, I consider two things to be of the utmost importance on continuing to evolve configuration and both involve modeling. Having heterogeneous classrooms, it is important to have students together who can help each other; student teaching student is very important to retaining information that is being taught and appropriate pairing has led to less classroom disruption and more student engagement with the lessons being taught. The impact has been significant in the additional amount of time that students are staying on task.

In chapter 3 - "Disciplinary Interventions", of Classroom Management that Works, Marzano poses two action steps, the first being, "employ specific techniques that acknowledge and reinforce acceptable and unacceptable behavior" and "acknowledge and provide negative consequences for unacceptable behavior." He provides evidence and discusses in depth ways to reward positive behavior and redirect or correct inappropriate behavior in the classroom. Marzano discusses various token economies and how they should not be perceived by students as bribery or coercion. Marzano further stresses the importance of home contact for both positive and disciplinary reasons. In the second action step, Marzano calls for, "establishing clear limits for unacceptable behavior and an effective system to record these behaviors."

Like Marzano, many of the new resources that I investigated presented a token economy. My school uses "Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports". On our team, it is up to the individual teacher to determine the rewards that are available for the tokens given. While reading and considering the resources for this module, I thought a great deal about how I could not only use a token economy to reward positive behavior, but also use it to engage students whose decreasing behavior interferes with instruction. The American Psychological Association's website contains the video, Practical Classroom Management, which also advocates the use of token economies to set the norm in the classroom. In addition to

classroom management, as an educator I have a strong desire to increase critical thinking, engage more students in volunteering to read aloud, support students staying on task and engaging in individual work at their desks as well as engaging in excellent overall class participation. I also wanted to be able to reward students being responsible, respectful, kind and safe under the PBIS program.

I developed a history dollar using the shell of the PBIS token, and added the areas of critical thinking, read aloud, hard work and excellent participation to the face of the token. I also changed the color of the history dollar to set it apart from the widely used school token. I purchased things for the redemption store that included pens, mechanical pencils, specialized pencils, folders and other things that could be purchased with these "history dollars". As a result of instituting the history dollar token economy, the instances of students volunteering to read increased to the point where almost every hand in the classroom goes up when asked for a volunteer to read. Students are also taking the time to critically think when presented with appropriate questions in a discussion setting. In addition, the overall classroom environment has become one in which students are tremendously more engaged and on task. Since instituting the history dollar, the desired learning environment has been achieved.

As part of chapter 4, Marzano discusses three action steps in the establishment of teacher-student relationships. First, he discusses using an appropriate level of dominance (which includes the use of assertive behavior by the teacher) and defining specific curriculum goals. Second, he recommends being flexible with goals sends a message of cooperation. Also part of this action step is taking a personal interest in students and giving students success when incorrectly answering questions for the connections they made that are accurate. Finally, Marzano points to understanding the different types of students that are in every classroom, from passive to aggressive, to perfectionists, to those who are socially inept and those that seek out attention. He also discusses how to understand and engage all students.

The greatest area of new learning came as a result of watching two very detailed online videos from the American Psychological Association's website. Practical Classroom Management and Classroom Disruption Interventions give very detailed information on the classroom from a whole class perspective. Topics presented include the basics of classroom setting, characteristics of instruction, student learning. The video also extensively discusses expectations. There is a tremendous amount of information on rules and procedures and how to effectively establish them in the classroom. The APA video then transitions to whole class success with behavior and prevention, intervention strategies and consistency of consequences. The video gives a thorough explanation of a functional behavioral assessment, the part it plays in identifying behavior, and finding causes and alternatives. Overall, the videos accomplish a great deal in teaching how to accentuate the positive, functional behavioral assessments, implementing effective strategies, designing a comprehensive behavioral plan and assessing and evaluating the impact of that plan.

I have some students who are constant behavioral challenges whom I tried to reach in many different ways. Through new learning I was able to change relationships based upon inflection of voice, proximity and giving more attention where needed. I am very grateful that I was working on the classroom environment module at this time because I needed new learning to address the needs of a very difficult student. One of my students was off task and having behavioral issues daily. I had never experienced the degree of challenge with a student than I experienced in trying to reach and help Luis. As a first year teacher I would not have known what processes needed to occur in order to help this student without the new learning opportunity that this module provided.

It was in this area that I learned the most and made the most changes. Using ideas from all of the resources that I read or viewed, I attempted many new and different processes or procedures including moving seats from the front of the room to the back of the room to asking the student where I could seat him so that he could be successful. I tried proximity hoping that getting closer to the student would help him get on task; this only made him entirely shut down or get even more challenging until I walked away. I tried to put his assignment in front of him with a pencil. When that did not work I put a differentiated assignment in front of him in hopes that he would at least work on a related assignment. In all cases the assignments either wound up ripped and on the floor or scribbled or drawn upon and left where he had been sitting. I tried ignoring and I tried going over and helping with the assignment, but I was met with no cooperation either way. I tried talking to the student about his grade telling him that if he just did the work he would be able to pass. The student replied, "I don't care. I am going to go to summer school." I eventually told him that if he continued to behave and work like he was in all of his classes, he would not be able to go to summer school. Instead, he would have to stay back in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. He responded, "I don't care."

I assigned detentions to which he would say, "I am not doing your detentions and I am not doing anything you say." I had finally tried everything that I could and after watching the APA video and learning about functional behavioral assessments, I requested that guidance accomplish an assessment which was done immediately. As a result of the assessment our team scheduled a parent meeting, and we collectively decided to change Luis' schedule and put him in classes with two adults.

Luis was assigned one day of In School Suspension and told the teacher in charge that he was being given a second chance and he was going to use it. Immediately there was a change in Luis' behavior. Since then he has totally bought into the token economy and is the first one in the class to raise his hand and attempt to answer a question. He volunteers to read aloud and has attempted to verbally answer some difficult critical thinking questions that others in the classroom do not attempt. I have taken every opportunity to praise him and tell him how extremely proud I am of the effort that he is putting forth. He has made up work and after failing my class the first trimester passed my class the second trimester with the letter grade of B.

The classroom environment module was a great opportunity for professional growth and development. I was able to use the guidance of my mentor, the teachings of Marzano, the American Psychological Association videos, along with many other resources, to improve my classroom environment so that more appropriate standards of behavior in my classroom support a more productive learning environment for all of my students.

"Sometimes .... we may find that our efforts are much more successful than we had hoped and a child's life may be turned around, and that is why we teach!"

-American Psychological Association.